

## Employability Services FAQ's

### General Questions

**Q.** How will the Scottish Government's funded employability programmes and services respond to an increase in unemployment as a result of Covid-19?

**A.** The Scottish Government will utilise the full powers available to it to minimise the negative impact of the pandemic on our economy. We are committed to protecting provision and continuity for those individuals who use employability services across the country during this challenging period and beyond as the economy begins to recover from this crisis.

We are bringing together key employability partners from Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions, Local Government and the Third Sector to form the Employability – COVID-19 Response - Operational Group. The group will work collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of the impact of the emerging health crisis on the Scottish Labour Market and Employability System at an individual, employer and sectoral level. The Group will examine existing funded programmes and how we can flex these to provide people and organisations with the support they need in the short and medium term. Full details of the group including membership, agenda and minutes of meetings will be published on [www.employabilityinscotland.com](http://www.employabilityinscotland.com) shortly.

**Q.** How do I get involved in the Employability Covid-19 Response Operational Group?

**A.** The Group's membership currently includes Scottish and Local Government, Skills Development Scotland, the Department for Work and Pensions and the third sector. At this time, we are not looking for additional members to sit on the group. We will however be encouraging members to consider how they involve others from their sectors in the work of the group to ensure they draw on the skills and experience of interested parties across Scotland.

**Q.** What is the Scottish Government doing to support the third sector providers who are delivering employability services to those who need support to get a job?

**A.** The Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF) is a £20m emergency fund for charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations working in Scotland. The fund will support organisations that already deliver services and products but find themselves in financial difficulties directly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The primary intention of the fund is to help third sector organisations to stabilise and manage cash flows over this difficult period. Applications for the Fund opened on Wednesday 25th March. Further information and details on how to apply can be found at: <https://scvo.org/support/coronavirus/funding/for-organisations/third-sector-resilience-fund/>

## **Employability Fund and Community Jobs Scotland**

**Q.** What support are you giving to participants on Scottish Government supported Training Programmes during this crisis?

**A.** Individuals who are unable to attend programmes supported by Scottish and Local Government (including Employability Fund,) due to the current health crisis will continue to receive allowances, where they are retained on the programme, or be directed to appropriate support to ensure those vulnerable groups are given the help they need. Those young people unable to complete their EF training and identified by the provider as a leaver, will be treated as a priority group and routed through CIAG; they will receive CIAG support and will be referred on to appropriate training provision such as our No One Left Behind programme, Fair Start Scotland, Local Government and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector provision, tailored to individual need.

We are currently considering with partners how we can develop this support in the longer term to respond to the impact of the virus on our economy, but our priority remains ensuring appropriate support for participants and learners.

**Q.** Who should participants in Scottish Government-supported Training programmes contact for help and support at this time?

**A.** The first point of contact for learners and participants should remain their training providers. However the following links may also be helpful:

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/>

<https://scvo.org.uk/support/coronavirus>.

## **Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE)**

**Q.** I have been made redundant who do I contact for help?

**A.** The Scottish Government's PACE initiative is continuing to provide support for individuals affected by redundancy. Given the restrictions on face to face contact as a result of Covid-19, the default delivery model for PACE support to be provided is by telephone and through enhanced online resources:

PACE Helpline Tel: 0800 917 8000 (Monday - Friday 9 am – 5 pm)

online at [www.redundancyscotland.co.uk](http://www.redundancyscotland.co.uk)

## **Careers Strategy**

**Q.** Is the Scottish Government still planning to implement the careers strategy during the COVID-19 outbreak?

**A.** We are collectively facing unprecedented challenging times and, as such, we are re-prioritising our resources so we can most effectively respond to the current situation. As such we have taken the decision to postpone the first meeting of the pan-sectoral group. The Scottish Government, in partnership with SDS, will be working closely together to focus our resources on our PACE (Partnership for Continuing Employment) support and how current Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) support can be offered in the most appropriate and effective way to support individuals.

The successful implementation of the strategy remains a commitment of the Scottish Government and will be recommenced at a future date with the effort and attention it rightly deserves to enable the careers sector to respond most effectively to the new climate in which we find ourselves.

**Q.** Can people still access careers information, advice and guidance services at this time?

**A.** In line with public health advice, Skills Development Scotland's (SDS) network of public access centres have temporarily closed and with the closure of schools, SDS careers advisers are no longer accessible through school. One-to-one contact with Careers Advisers is available online and by phone. Visit [myworldofwork.co.uk/centres](http://myworldofwork.co.uk/centres) to find a local number. Career information and advice is also available through our online service My World of Work. [www.myworldofwork.co.uk](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk)

## **No One Left Behind**

**Q.** Does Scottish Government intend to continue with the No One Left Behind approach?

**A.** Scottish Government intends to build on the vision and principles of No One Left Behind as part of our response to the impacts of COVID-19. This will ensure priorities for employability are based on objective evidence, engagement with local stakeholders, and put users at the heart of any service design to agree outcomes which reflect national and local ambitions.

## **Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF)**

**Q.** Will the impact of Covid-19 affect the implementation and delivery ambitions of Parental Employability Support Fund?

**A.** Collaboratively managed between Scottish and Local Government, Parental Employability Support Fund activity will continue to evolve over time. COVID-19 has interrupted the delivery of PESF - however Local Government continue to support vulnerable individuals in their local areas to access the right support, through alternative methods of engagement. Third Sector and Local Authority partners are looking at what is feasible to do digitally/remotely.

## **Health Work Support**

**Q.** How will the Covid-19 crisis affect Health & Work Support Pilot provision?

**A.** The Health & Work Support Pilot running in Tayside and Fife closed mid-March, as the clinically trained staff involved in the pilot were re-deployed to help with the Covid-19 response in NHS Tayside and NHS Fife. Therefore, no new referrals are being accepted and existing service users are being contacted to ensure they know how to access alternative support in their local area. The website is still available and contains useful links for those looking for support: [www.healthandworksupport.scot/](http://www.healthandworksupport.scot/)

**Q.** The pilot has closed, but what support can I get instead?

**A.** The Health and Work Supports website has some useful links for those looking for support: [www.healthandworksupport.scot/](http://www.healthandworksupport.scot/)

**Q.** The pilot has closed, but I am being contacted by Ipsos Mori/Rocket Science to speak about my experience of the pilot - do I still need to do this?

**A.** Although the service is no longer available we still intend to carry out an evaluation in order to assess how the pilot may have helped individuals who accessed it, to inform any future service provision. Therefore we would still encourage you to take part in evaluation activities such as interviews with Ipsos Mori and Rocket Science who have been contracted by the Scottish Government to undertake such work.

## **Disability Employment Action Plan**

**Q.** I am disabled and I have recently been made redundant, what support is available for me?

**A.** If you have been made redundant as a result of COVID-19, the Scottish Government PACE support can be accessed via phone (0800 917 8000) or online at <http://www.redundancyscotland.co.uk/>.

**Q.** I have a long term health condition and have been told by my doctor that I must self-isolate. How do I communicate this to my employer?

**A.** Information and guidance on self-isolating for both employees and employers can be found here: <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus> Employees and workers must receive any Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) due to them if they need to self-isolate. Your employer might need to be flexible if asking for self-isolation notes as, for example, an employee with severe symptoms might not be able to get a note straight away.

**Q.** I have been told by my employer I must return to work, however I do not feel comfortable doing so due to my health condition. How do I communicate this to my employer?

**A.** Information and guidance to support homeworking can be found on the [Scottish Government website](#). This also contains guidance for employers across a range of sectors. If workers think their working conditions are unsafe, they have rights under employment legislation. Further guidance can be found at [ACAS](#). For workers who are members of trade unions, you may wish to also speak to your relevant trade union representative.

**Q.** As a disabled person trying to secure work during the COVID-19 pandemic, will I be at a disadvantage when many others will also be out of work?

**A.** We recognise that COVID-19 is already having a huge public health and economic impact in Scotland, and that the longer term impact on employment opportunities of disabled people in particular is not yet known. The Scottish Government is however committed to reducing the employment gap between disabled people and the rest of the working age population. Our recently published [Annual Progress Report](#) highlights the work carried out so far in support of this goal, as well as outlining work we hope to take forward for 2020/21.

**Q.** What support is available to young disabled people looking for work during the pandemic?

**A.** Economy Secretary Fiona Hyslop recently announced investment of £60million to develop a Scottish Young Persons Guarantee to give all young people access to work, training or education. The implementation plan is currently being developed by Sandy Begbie. The Young Persons Guarantee, rooted in industry, will mitigate against the worst of the impact on young people as a result of the pandemic. We will work to ensure that young disabled people are included in this developing work, which includes young people having the opportunity to develop their skills to enter

the labour market through a suite of support mechanisms. We are fully engaged with third sector organisations to ensure that the appropriate support is provided through the young person's guarantee. This will be driven through our equalities delivery group, under the principles of No one left behind, to ensure that all young people have equal access to all opportunities.

**Q.** What support is available to help disabled parents into work?

**A.** In August 2020 Cabinet Secretary for Local Communities, Aileen Campbell announced, as part of a statement to Parliament on the Child Poverty Second Year Progress Report, that a further £2.35 million will be made available to the Parental Employability Support Fund this financial year to boost the £5 million already allocated. £1 million of this additional funding will be particularly targeted at supporting disabled parents to progress toward employment and to compete for suitable jobs through the Disabled Parents Employability Support Fund (DPESF). We are committed to working together with local authorities, Disabled People's Organisations and individuals themselves to identify an approach to deliver this funding and the additional support needed to help disabled people to access and sustain employment.

**Q.** There is already a sizeable disability employment gap – will the Scottish Government still continue to implement A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan?

**A.** The Scottish Government continue to reassess all planned work programmes in light of COVID-19, and may need to reprioritise its work as a result. This includes planned activity for the coming year as part of A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan. However, we remain committed to addressing inequalities in the labour market and this will include taking action to try to minimise any negative impact on disabled people.

### **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

**Q.** With schools and colleges closed will EMA still be paid?

**A.** Yes. The guidance states that an authorised absence would include a scenario where the learning centre is closed due to unforeseen circumstances. This would apply in this instance.

**Q.** Will students who are in self isolation because of Covid-19 receive their EMA payments?

**A.** Yes. The guidance states that an authorised absence includes ill health. This also applies to those who have self-isolated due to their parents/carers having health issues which put them at risk. We appreciate that many doctors surgeries will not be

in a position to issue medical certificates. Therefore we have asked local authorities to view such cases sympathetically and follow the discretion which the guidance allows.

**Q.** Will everyone whose application has been authorised on the system continue to receive EMA throughout any self-imposed isolation period and/or whilst learning centres are closed?

**A.** Yes. As stated above the guidance allows for absence for unforeseen circumstances, which is applicable in this current situation.

**Q.** Do schools/colleges require evidence that students have been advised to self-isolate because they are experiencing some symptoms?

**A.** No.

### **Fair Start Scotland**

**Q.** What support will be given to FSS Participants during the Covid-19 crisis?

**A.** Service Providers will continue to engage with and support FSS Participants using alternate methods of contact in a way that best suits the individual.

**Q.** How will the Covid-19 crisis affect Fair Start Scotland Service Providers financially?

**A.** We are working closely with Providers and have agreed flexibilities to the existing financial model that will support the continuity of Fair Start Scotland during this crisis

**Q.** What support will be given to Service Providers during the Covid-19 crisis?

**A.** The Scottish Government continues to work closely with FSS Service Providers with the introduction of weekly calls to discuss actions to help support both Service Providers and Participants.

**Q.** How will SG ensure continuity of Fair Start Scotland during this period?

**A.** SG and Service Providers will continue to engage throughout this period to ensure that FSS Participants remain supported and that FSS continues to be delivered as required.

**Q.** Who should Fair Start Scotland Participants contact for support at this time?

**A.** Participants should continue to engage with their Service Providers at this time and agree the best method of engagement for them. If they are unable to get in

touch with the Service Provider for any reason, they can contact the Fair Start Scotland helpline on 0800 804 8108.

**Q.** I am recently unemployed and would like to join Fair Start Scotland – How would I go about this?

**A.** If you wish to join Fair Start Scotland, please visit our website: <https://www.mygov.scot/help-find-job/> or alternatively, contact our helpline on 0800 804 8108 for more information.

**Q.** Why have you decided to extend the Fair Start Scotland Service?

**A.** Extending the current services and delivery model provides a strong foundation from which to respond to a rapidly changing labour market, as well as delivering on our ‘test and learn’ approach to employability support, and allows us to work with our partners in local government and the third sector towards longer term local integration within No One Left Behind.

**Q.** Will all existing Prime Contractors continue to deliver FSS in the same form?

**A.** This extension period provides stability and continuity as we respond to the current Covid-19 crisis and move into our economic restart and recovery phases. We will work closely with Providers, local government and the third sector, using the extension as a transition phase, to focus on continuous improvement of delivery and work towards better local alignment and integration of services.

### **Discovering your potential**

**Q.** Will the Covid 19 crisis affect funding for continuation of the Discovering Your Potential programme in 2020-21?

**A.** The Scottish Government recognises the importance of continuing to provide support to young care leavers and we will continue to fund the programme for 2020-21.

**Q.** I can't leave home to see my training provider or attend my training placement, what should I do?

**A.** You should keep in contact with your training provider or key worker by telephone or email. They will talk to you about how your training is affected by the current isolation rules and what can be done to help you in the meantime.

## **Our Future Now**

**Q.** Will the Covid 19 crisis affect funding for continuation of the Our Future Now programme in 2020-21?

**A.** The Scottish Government recognises that many young people rely on the support they receive from the programme. Funding is still being provided to support this programme in 2020-21.

**Q.** I can't leave home to see my training provider or attend my training placement, what should I do?

**A.** You should keep in contact with your training provider or key worker by telephone or email. They will talk to you about how your training is affected by the current isolation rules and what can be done to help you in the meantime.